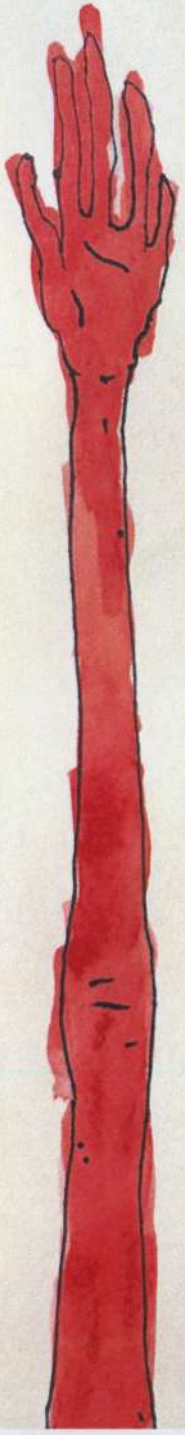

STAINS

POEMS BY CODY MERRICK

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Poet Voice

I hate that poet voice
That voice that turns each word to saccharine mush
That won't-you-please-think-of-the-trees poet voice
I hate that poet voice
That voice that pleads with every word for applause
That soft and sweet nobel peace poet voice

I want the piss-drunk shouting up at the sun poet voice
The coughing words through smoker's lungs poet voice
The dinner at the gas station, four dollars a gallon, poet voice
The overdrafted, overdue, urgent action required poet voice.
The unlucky to be alive, too high for another line poet voice.

A Beginner's Guide To Murder-Suicide

When I was fifteen I tried to kill my father with a hunting knife.
I waited for hours for him by the back deck door, my head hurting from listening to the pounding of my own heart beat.
He was bigger but I thought if I just got him once real good in the ribs it'd get him toppled over.
Once I got him down I'd take to his neck and stop when I hit bone.
Of course then it'd be my turn.
With all the adrenaline I figured I wouldn't have even been able to feel my wrists split.
But my mother got home first.

Why are you crying?
And what's that knife for?

I'll kill him
I'll fucking kill him

Skull Night

I slap down my cards on a sticky, stained table.
My throat burns from the liquor and the yelling.
Six!
He flips the cards over one by one.
Black, black, black, then red.
The table erupts. He hangs his head.
I lean back in my chair, smiling and the room spinning.
I press my hands into my warm oily face.

Catch Up

Sometimes my friend back home will come into the city to tell me I need to visit more, whenever he does we catch up. *You know Seth St. Angelo's little brother?* Nothing good ever follows a question like that. *Only talked to him a few times.* I knew that look. I could have written his eulogy without another word. Poor kid.

Poor, pale car-seat corpse.
His veins wilted poppy black.
Quiet til morning.

Revolver

Heavy in my hand, my brother's revolver has gotten rusty.
I used to clean it like he showed me, laying out each part carefully, gently shining the brass.
I struggle now to even pull the hammer back, its cylinder no longer spins.

I remember when it used to ring out like thunder and spit flames from its barrel.
When it would fly from its beat leather holster and twirl on my brother's finger,
When it was weightless and dangerous.

Homemaker

I will paint these walls with our blood and stain this carpet with your tears.
I will break each window and dirty each corner.
I will make our cabinets barren to feel that familiar pain of hunger.
I will dig up our garden and pull the doors off their hinges.
I will fill our hallways with screaming so you will never know peace.
I will leave our dogs beaten and our children afraid.
I will black your eyes and red your wrists.
I will burn down our house with you inside and salt our yard when the ashes clear.

Lee's

Everyone's famous for just a few seconds
When you walk by Lee's on Commonwealth
Looking through the cracked plexiglass
Up on that old TV, a model on a concrete runway

The Trouble With Modern Alchemy

I'll do it again.
Just a fourth to make the room spin.
It was just that one time I thought I was dying.
Nothing is supposed to feel this good.
Just a fourth to make the room spin.
A sip of twenty-one to wash my cotton mouth.
Nothing is supposed to feel this good.
It's hard to see the future, I can't even see straight.
A sip of twenty-one to wash my cotton mouth.
It's nothing I can't manage.
It's hard to see the future, I can't even see straight.
I'm okay, I don't even get the shakes on the weeks I can't buy.
It's nothing I can't manage.
It was just that one time I thought I was dying.
I'm okay, I don't even get the shakes on the weeks I can't buy.
I'll do it again.

Saco

I knew as soon as I stepped off the bus, I don't belong in Saco.
The smiling faces didn't need to tell me, I knew.
The air was clear and crisp and it burned my lungs to breathe it.
The sky too blue to look at without my eyes hurting.
The sidewalk too clean to press my dirty sneakers into.

The bus out of Saco smelled like sweat, and felt like home.
It had my name carved into the tray tables between the coffee rings.
It was too crowded and too hot.
The floor rattled and the seats squeaked.
But through the dirty windows Saco looked alright.

Linoleum

Made in America, affordably priced, machine-cut linoleum.
Naturally insulated from heat and sudden loud noises.
Made sustainably and always ortho-phthalate free.
Resistant to wear from heavy foot traffic and frantic fleeing.
Available in sixteen sleek and professional colorways.
Long-lasting and easy to clean kid blood off of.

Muscle

He was as pretty and loud as his made-in-Detroit muscle car.
He'd hang his arm out the window and let his fingers tap against the cherry paint.
In the summer his back would stick to the leather seats and when he got up they'd be shining and smell just like him.
When tapped his foot and the engine revved you could feel the hum run up your legs and deep into your chest.
He held the shift in his hand, his fingers moving it back and forth while the light came through the windshield and hit his rings just right.

REVEAL ALL MY OBEDIENT FLESH
WORSHIP ME DOMINATE ME
BREED MY PROUD QUEER ASS
TAKE ME BROKEN & THANKFUL
FOR THE LOVE OF
ALL US SAME-SEX SLUTS
LET ME PRAISE YOU
GIVE YOU ALL THE JOYS OF
FLESHLY
UNCUT
FAG LOVE

Remorseless

I was high off Xanax the first time I heard Billy Woods say
There's a freedom in admitting that it's not gonna get better.
When I'm sober I can't hear them yelling *Get clean* at people who were born addicted.
I try to play my cards right, but you just can't beat genetics.
I can see the reaper dealing off the bottom of the deck.
Life in fourths with two eights and an ace already facing, my turn it's time to hit again.

I Hit Like My Father

I hit like my father,
the father who told me,
Even if you are a faggot, never let another man speak on you like that,
I don't care if he's down, you hit him again.
And I showed him how it feels to forget your place.
I *will* hit him again,
and I stop only when he doesn't have teeth left in his swollen mouth to say my name again,
when he *knows* to look down when he sees me.

I cry like my mother,
the mother who gave me ice packs to sit on after I got done learning that I can hit hard but my father still hits harder.
Paychecks from the eight work days plus overtime going towards chemotherapy and whatever's left in the offering basket, because god tests us all.
I cry, but not too loud and not too long because it's not the world's problems and I have to be up early anyways.

My tears fall like my mother's but land on my father's scarred up hands.
My heart beats hard and dark like my father's but bleeds like my mother's on her Sunday best sleeve.

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Unlucky

Unlucky. Black clover inked into my skin. Damn right I'm unlucky.
No schizo born in this country ever was lucky.
The black dog gnawing on my leg, I'd be lucky if he stops before hitting the bone.
I've lived long enough. Long enough to know that they'll never call my numbers.
I know how it works. That all this only ends one way.
Scraping me off the concrete runway.
But I try to be optimistic, maybe the drugs or the four cans of Rockstar a day will stop my heart first. Before I get too bad.
Maybe next time that trigger won't be so damn rusty.

Eulogy

After all these years I get to face you.
Because you are finally, finally, dead.
Couldn't you have died sooner?
Died twenty years ago?
Even now I still hate you.
For everything you did to me.
God, I hope you're in hell.
Hell would be too nice place for you.
I hope it hurt, I hope you were scared,
Just like you made us feel.
Kids, we were kids.
Look at you now.
Motionless, silent, alone.
Nobody around to take this out on.
Out of victims, out of words, out of time.
Pathetic.
Quite a fitting end actually.
Resting how you lived, totally alone.
Surprising you didn't take Mom with you.
Though maybe spending all her money was enough.
Useless though now, isn't it, Dad?
Vicious how quick it all ended isn't it?
Wasted years, nothing to show for it.
Xeroxing your father's life, except he was a soldier.
You were

Portland Blue

I want to stand knee deep in the Portland shore with a cigarette in my teeth.
I want, for the first time, to be sober and cold.

When I come back to Boston they'll ask me how it was up there, and I'll tell them,
Portland has beautiful eyes.

Boston (Black Sky)

When I got back to Boston it was an ash pile, a smoking crater being filled with dirty rain, the air smelled of smoke and sewage, the trains screeched like rusting banshees, the city dying a festering death begs you to stay inside, away from it all, away from every blade of grass that had been drowned in asphalt a hundred times over, the animals that had become roadkill stains on the neverending sprawling web of highway that strangled the earth, slowly poisoning it, it and me, and everyone else whose fingernails had broken off trying to claw out, whose soles had been worn down to the bone trying to walk out from under the black sky.

I'll Be Back Tomorrow

Ripped clothes and closed doors. Smoke detector disconnected.
Broken stereo so we scream the only words we know, because we know
There's freedom in admitting that it's not gonna get better.
We share needles and pray to god for bad weather.
Smoke in the air, white lighter singed silverware.
No way out but leaving by the second story window, I'll be back tomorrow.
Even if I slip and smash my head on the concrete I won't feel it.
What's one more stain on the sidewalk cement?

Death Rattle

I do not want a quiet death.
I want my death to be that final eruption of a lifetime of festering rage.
Frothing, screeching, shaking, screaming.

I do not want a quiet death.
I want whoever pulls the needle from my arm or the rope from my neck to know that I met the reaper with teeth bared and fists clenched.

I do not want a quiet death.
I want my death to be lonely and bloody and painful because dying in peace is for the old and the rich and the forgotten.

I do not want a quiet death.
I want to die upset, because death should be upsetting.
I want to die killing the stillness and silence, the false dignity, of death.
I want to die leaving claw marks on everything that knew me.

Eulogy (Reprise)

Another eulogy, like that poem you wrote so long ago,
But you've said enough.
Can't twist this for yourself anymore.
Did you think we would forgive you?
Everyone you hurt, everyone who really knew you,
Fucking hates you.
God, I hope they forget you.
How many people fell for that tortured artist shit?
If only they knew sooner who you really were.
Just like your father.
Kinder maybe, at first.
Long enough to get their guards down.
Maybe that's what made it fun for you.
No, it was the pain you enjoyed.
Over and over again.
Plunging your yellow fangs into anybody with a pulse.
Quick to blame the drugs or childhood or the schizophrenia,
Really it was never your fault.
So many people you left to pick up the pieces,
Trying to figure out why you did that to them.
Useless though, really.
Violence was just what you did,
Who you were.
Xeroxing your father's life, he died with nothing,
You did too.
Zero.

Untitled

Tomorrow someone will take my seat.
In two weeks they'll shut my lights off.
In two more they'll scrape my name off the mailbox.
After a month people will ask where I went.
After another they'll stop.

Dedications

Skull Night	for	MT, EC, MS, IS, MK, AS
Revolver	for	GG
FAG LOVE	for	SPR
Portland Blue	for	MM
I'll Be Back Tomorrow	for	EP
Untitled	for	MAJ